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ABSTRACT

Under the auspices of the American Association of School Administrators and the Ford Foundation, Project AWARE (Assisting Women to Advance through Resources and Encouragement) in 1981 surveyed the United States territories as well as all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Data were gathered from chief state school officers on school administrators' sex, race, and ethnic background. For Puerto Rico, Guam, the Northern Marianas, and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, four tables present data for all administrators and for superintendents, assistant superintendents, and principals. Among the findings are that women make up a majority of school administrators in Puerto Rico and Guam but are in the minority in the Pacific Islands; that there are no women superintendents in Guam, the Northern Marianas, or the Pacific Islands, but 43 percent of Puerto Rican superintendents are women; and that women constitute 58 percent of Puerto Rican principals and 47 percent of Guamanian principals, but are underrepresented in the Northern Marianas and Pacific Islands. Women may be closer to parity in school administration in Puerto Rico because it is a developing country, because most teachers there are women, or because of Puerto Rico's cultural heritage from the matriarchal Taino Indians. (RW)

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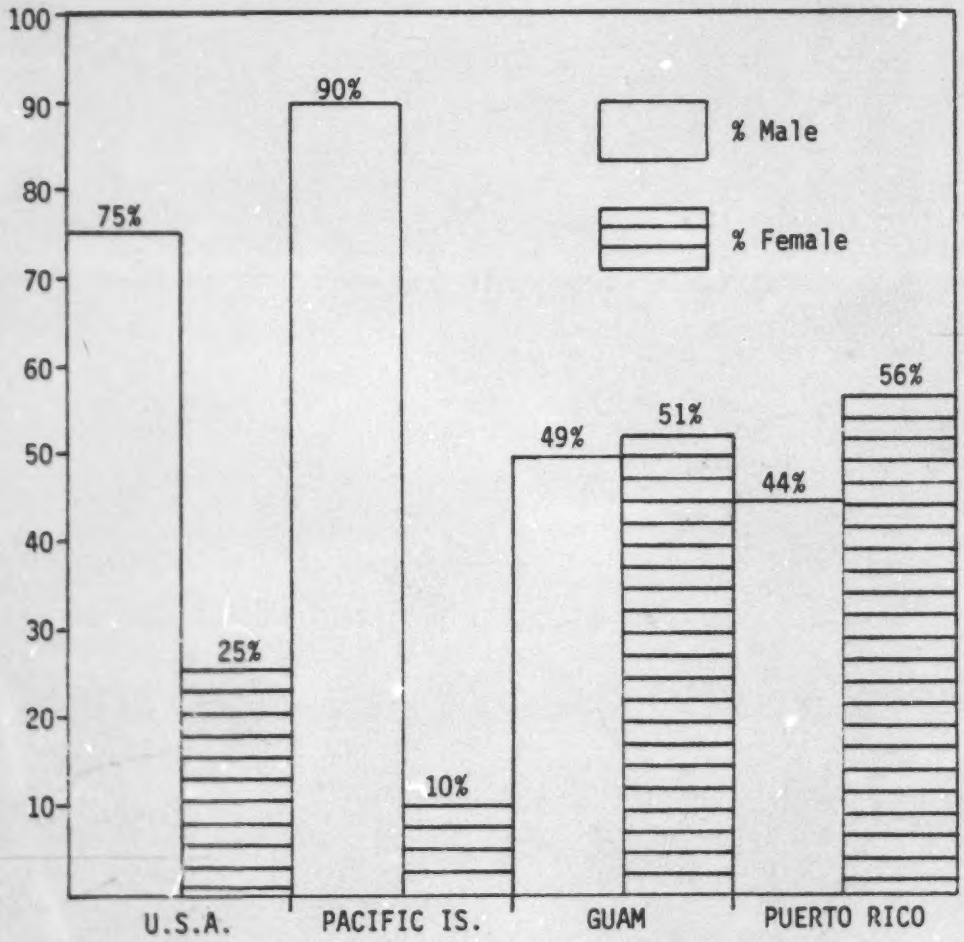
A Look at Sex Equity in School Administration in the U.S. Territories



EA 015 415

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

A Look at Sex Equity in School Administration in the U.S. Territories

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The outlying areas of the United States, namely Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands in the Atlantic, and Guam, Northern Marianas, American Samoa, and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands in the Pacific, span the globe from east to west. The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico is the largest with more than three million Spanish speaking inhabitants. The Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, Guam, and the Virgin Islands each have populations of approximately one-hundred thousand. American Samoa and the Northern Mariana islands comprise the smaller territories.

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA), in its Fall 1981 Project AWARE survey of the sex and race/ethnicity of school administrators, also collected data from the United States' outlying areas. As was done in the survey for the 50 states and the District of Columbia, questionnaires were sent to the chief state school officers of these areas, inquiring about the sex and racial/ethnic background of their school administrators. Completed questionnaires were received from Puerto Rico, Guam, the Northern Marianas and the Pacific Islands.

Needless to say, the results show that the representation of certain ethnic groups is larger in those territories where these groups predominate. Puerto Rico is predominantly Hispanic although the commonwealth inhabitants have Anglo influence and have African and Taino Indian ethnic antecedents. The remaining respondent territories have Asian/Pacific Islander populations, and so are their school administrators. An examination of the ethnic/racial distribution of administrators in these outlying areas, and comparisons with the United States, would

therefore be an unfair and useless excercise. However, the sex distribution of school administrators presented some interesting comparisons.

It was found that Puerto Rico and Guam have women majorities in school administration (56 and 51 percent, respectively), a marked difference from shool administration in the United States, where three out of four administrators are men (Jones and Montenegro, 1982). In the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, however, men administrators are predominant at 9 out of 10. The Northern Marianas did not have any available information on the sex distribution of their school administrators (See Table 1).

The superintendency, the highest school administrative position, is sadly still the domain of men in the territories as in the United States, with the exception of Puerto Rico. No women superintendents were reported in Guam, the Northern Marianas, and the Pacific Islands. Guam and the Northern Marianas each have only one school superintendent, both of whom are male. The Pacific Islands have 8 school superintendents, all male. Puerto Rico, however, has 36 women superintendents (or 41%) among a total of 87 (See Table 2).

Women consist the majority (53%) of the 230 deputy/associate/ assistant superintendents in Puerto Rico. In Guam two out of the five same positions are occupied by women. In the Northern Marianas, there is only one deputy/associate/assistant superintendent position, filled by a

Table 1

Sex Distribution of School Administrators

in the U.S. Territories (1981-82)

	Male		Female		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Guam	40	49	41	51	81
Northern Marianas	(No information provided)				
Pacific Islands	401	90	45	10	446
Puerto Rico	687	44	880	56	1567

Table 2

Sex Distribution of Superintendents
in the U.S. Territories (1981-82)

	Male		Female		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Guam	1	49	41	51	81
Northern Marianas	1	100	0	0	1
Pacific Islands	8	100	0	0	8
Puerto Rico	51	59	36	41	87

woman. In the Pacific Islands all six deputy/associate/assistant superintendents are men (See Table 3). The figures for Guam and Puerto Rico (40 and 53% female, respectively) are surely a marked improvement in comparison to the 8 percent figure for women in this position in the United states (Jones and Montenegro, 1982).

In the principalship, as with school administration in general, the Northern Marianas and the Pacific Islands follow the example of the United States in the underrepresentation of women. Only one of 14 principals in the Northern Marianas is a woman. In the Pacific Islands, 247 or 94% of the principals are men and only 16 (6%) are women (See Table 4). The results of the AASA Project AWARE survey yielded a 16 percent figure for women among school principals in the United States. However, data from Puerto Rico and Guam point toward the opposite direction. A majority or 651 (58%) of the 1,117 principals in Puerto Rico are women. Guan's women principals comprise 47 percent of the total.

It is difficult to explain the reasons behind sex parity in school administration in Puerto Rico, and to some extent Guam, in comparison with the United States and two other territories surveyed. Northern Marianas and the Pacific Islands, like the United States, have a gross underrepresentation of women in school administration. Has Puerto Rico's women achieved equity when their sisters in the 50 states and in the other territories have not? Male advocates may in fact claim reverse discrimination!

Table 3

Sex Distribution of Deputy/Associate/Assistant Superintendents in the U.S. Territories (1981-82)

	Male		Female		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Guam	3	60	2	40	5*
Northern Marianas	0	0	1	100	1
Pacific Islands	6	100	0	0	6
Puerto Rico	108	47	122	53	230

*The total is actually six, but the sex of the sixth administrator was not reported.

Table 4

Sex Distribution of Principals in

the U.S. Territories (1981-82)

	Male		Female		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Guam	17	53	15	47	32
Northern Marianas	13	93	1	7	14
Pacific Islands	247	94	16	6	263
Puerto Rico	466	42	651	58	1117

Explanations underlying the above results have been explored, and a few are advanced here. A probable explanation has been mentioned in the literature with respect to developing countries. Puerto Rico, despite its Commonwealth status under the United States, may be considered among all the outlying areas to come closest to the definition of an underdeveloped state. It's population density is 15 times that of the United States, and its economic output per person is 30 percent of the U.S. average (US. News and World Report, 1982).

In a conference of minority women scientists it was reported that Puerto Ricans perceived no significant problems with sex discrimination in Puerto Rico, but were very much aware of such problems on the (U.S.) mainland. Puerto Ricans themselves claimed that equal and active participation by people of both genders in careers and education is not unusual for developing countries. Apparently, the economic needs of families in developing countries require both husband and wife to work and earn the maximum possible income for the family. In Puerto Rican universities, women share equally with men in both number and rank, although women are less welcome in industry. (Malcolm, Hall, and Brown, 1976).

A second explanation of majority women administrators in Puerto Rico and very possibly Guam, might be the greater numbers of women teachers in these areas. The teaching force is the labor pool from where administrators are usually selected. While in the United States 67 percent of teachers are women, the figure is suspected to be even higher

in Puerto Rico and Guam. If this is the case, fewer men are then available for administrative positions. No surveys are available to support this hypothesis, although it has been reported that in the entire educational scene, the Puerto Rican female presently seems to be on top. There are more women than men in the universities. Puerto Rican women find education as the escape hatch to leave a stereotyped and limited role. They are also much more likely to be employed in the field of education and in other helping professions. A study of the guidance systems in the public schools of Puerto Rico in 1974 revealed that 86% of the school counselors are female, while in the United States the sex distribution is about 53% women to 47% men counselors (Christensen, 1975).

On the other hand, there have been no studies available on the Guamanian women, who usually are classified with Hawaiians and Samoans. Only a tangential reference was made to Guamanians in the observation that Asian/Pacific women have a higher participation in the work force than White women (Fong and Cabezas, 1980).

Perhaps the strongest reason for women's dominace in school administration in Puerto Rico, however, lies in their cultural heritage. Steiner (1974) asserted that the matriarchial Taino Indian society which was flourishing in the island when Columbus first came still has its remnants today despite Arglo and Hispanic influences. Then the rulers were women, who were not as likely to perform menial tasks as the men. The women then fought side by side with the men against the Spaniards. At the time, the male was also reported to have been used as sacrifice to

the gods. In recent times, the Puerto Rican woman has been typified as persevering, achieving, ambitious, and determined. Despite conflicts with motherhood and other social expectations of her, educational attainment is a desired and desirable goal. She accepts and seeks new roles without relinquishing old roles. She does not directly challenge male authority but quietly maneuvers to have her way (Christensen, 1975). Christensen also repeated King's summary observation and clinical experience with the Puerto Rican woman:

> The situation in Puerto Rico helps to debunk further the stereotpe of a passive Purto Rican women. The woman in Puerto Rico, despite the discrimination which persists against the woman employed outside the home, has played an unusually important role, especially in public and academic life.
>
> (King, 1974, p.26)

Going back to school administration, it is clear that more research is necessary to accept or nullify the hypotheses presented. We need to know the representation of teachers in the areas discussed and even trends in other countries. We also need to know the employment patterns in these areas. In addition, sociologlcal studies on Guamanian an Pacific Islander women and their careers have to be conducted in order to fill the void of information for these groups.

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PROJECT AWARE

Project AWARE -- Assisting Women to Advance through Resources and Encouragement -- is funded by the Ford Foundations and established to help women educators climb the administrative ladder. Under the auspices of the American Association of School Administrators and the Ford Foundation a coalition of regional and local organizations have joined together to assist women in this effort. The seven organizations participating in Project AWARE are located throughout the country and provide services to 40 states. Each organization brings impressive credentials to the project and all centers work to identify qualified women administrators, equip them with skills and know-how basic to todays administrative strategy, and put them in touch with job openings as they occur.

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